

V. State and MPO Context

For Greenway, Signal and Sidewalk needs, the City of Asheville continues to try and work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation at the State and Division level in order to coordinate pedestrian needs with road construction and long range planning and to seek grant assistance for construction.

The **NCDOT Pedestrian Policy** (Policy Attached), adopted by NC Board of Transportation, September 8, 2000, reaffirms NCDOT's commitment to non-motorized modes of transportation and lays out guidelines concerning sidewalks. NCDOT will pay 100% of the cost to replace an existing sidewalk that is removed to facilitate the widening of a road. It will also work with local jurisdictions to include pedestrian projects as "incidental" to roadway projects through cost-sharing and when certain requirements are met. With between 50,000 and 100,000 in population, the City must pay 40% and NCDOT will pay 60% of costs for an "incidental" sidewalk.

NCDOT has a separate category of funds for "independent" pedestrian projects where installation is unrelated to a TIP roadway project. These types of projects are administered in accordance with the NCDOT's **Enhancement Program Guidelines**. The Enhancement Program (authorized under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century or "TEA-21") allows local governments to apply for, or sponsor applications for pedestrian facilities that enhance the transportation system and promote economic development through a competitive process that is offered every other year. Enhancement Projects exclusively for sidewalks however are less likely to be funded than those that meet a variety of transportation and enhancement goals.

The City also works directly through the **French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization ("MPO")** to get projects concerning all modes of transportation on the **State Transportation Improvement Program ("TIP")** list or the Priority Needs List. The TIP is updated every two years and presents a seven-year schedule of projects and funding. The TIP is developed at the State level by the State Board of Transportation and at the local level by the French Broad River MPO. The State and Local TIP drafts must agree for inclusion in the Statewide Plan. Projects on the TIP are either "scheduled" and have funding budgeted for project implementation at certain years, or are unscheduled (or "post years"), and are on the TIP but do not have funds allocated to them within the 7-year TIP schedule.

Projects on the Priority Needs List ("**PNL**") have been identified by the City and placed on the list of needs for State consideration by the MPO. Projects on this list are all unfunded, and the list is updated every two years by the MPO on alternate years from the TIP. The PNL provides a pool of projects for consideration at the State or local Division level should funds become available. Additionally, these projects could be considered "incidental" in future NCDOT roadway improvements on the adjacent roadway.

Getting projects on the TIP or PNL is a political and dynamic process. There are far more needs than there are funds when it comes to the State transportation system. Often projects are taken from the Priority Needs List to the TIP, but some projects will go directly to the TIP because of their political backing, timeliness, or relevance/relationship to another DOT project.

A. Projects in State 2004-2011 Planning Horizon (TIP and PNL):

TIP Sidewalk Projects:

- **E-4814** FFY '04 East side of Avon Road from East Asheville Library to Haw Creek Park and on West side of Avon Road from Haw Creek Park to Beverly Road; and on south side of New Haw Creek Road from Arco Road to Beverly Road.
- **E-4816** FFY '04 Pack Square Renaissance streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements.
- **E-4585** Sidewalks and Pedestrian features on Amboy Road between the Carrier Bridge and Michigan Avenue. This project is under construction but has been delayed due to right of way acquisition issues with one property owner.

TIP Greenway/Multi-Use Path Projects:

- **E-3608** Amboy Road to Hominy Creek Road Connector. Off-road trail along the French Broad River FFY '04.
- **E-4406** Swannanoa River Greenway from US25 to the Nature Center – scheduled for a feasibility study. (Note this project overlaps the Riverway Plan that is also in the Priority Needs List)
- **E-4407** Amboy Road extension from Amboy road at 191 interchange to French Broad River Park – scheduled for feasibility study. This connection is being developed locally in conjunction with E-3608, E-4585, and River Park development.
- **E-4724** Azalea Road Greenway FFY 04 to link Azalea Road Park to Swan. River Road and the Beverly Hills Neighborhood.
- **E-4815** FFY '04, Enhancements on Clingman Avenue and a parallel greenway through the Clingman Forest.
- **E-4723** Woodfin Rail-Trail/Greenway along Riverside Drive from Broadway to Woodfin – Scheduled for a feasibility study.

PNL (Unfunded) Sidewalk Projects:

- **Hendersonville Road/US 25.** Construct sidewalks on Hendersonville Road at critical areas: from the Wal-Mart entrance to Mill's Gap Road and from West Chapel Road to Rock Hill Road. All of Hendersonville Road is in need of safe sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, but these two segments represent the highest priorities.
- **Fairview Road in Oakley.** A sidewalk extension that connects the Oakley Community to two shopping centers to the east of this busy interchange. A particular need is to provide for pedestrian traffic across I-240. This crossing over 240 has been studied by the NCDOT Division office and is not compatible with safety standards and guidelines. However, because pedestrians and wheelchairs continue to use this route, it deserves further consideration.
- **Merrimon Avenue** from W.T. Weaver Boulevard to King Street. This segment serves a commercial area and is opposite Weaver Park and the entrance to the Tennis Courts. There are topographic constraints, making this a costly but critical segment. This is the site of a pedestrian fatality.

- **Merrimon Avenue** from Elkwood Avenue to Brookdale Road is missing a segment of sidewalk forcing pedestrians to go our into the road or to cross at a dangerous intersection in order to continue along the corridor.
- **Merrimon Avenue** from the new North Asheville library north to the Park and south to existing sidewalk along US25/Merrimon Avenue. This will connect the Beaverdam Lake area and the new library to existing sidewalk along Merrimon.
- **New Haw Creek Road.** A portion of this project has been funded through an Enhancements grant and a partnership with the City of Asheville and the Haw Creek Community Association. Sidewalks are needed along the entire length of New Haw Creek Road and Avon Road. The project is funded from Arco Rod to Beverly Road on the TIP.
- **Beaverdam Road.** Pedestrian facilities are needed on Beaverdam Road from Merrimon Avenue to Lynn Cove Road. This is also an identified greenway corridor on the Asheville Greenways Master Plan. This sidewalk connects the Ingles market and other commercial generators along Merrimon to Asheville Catholic School, Asbury Church and the sidewalk along Kimberly to Jones School, and the YMCA at Beaverdam.
- **Brevard Road.** This sidewalk would allow pedestrian access to hotels, Biltmore Mall, and other commercial destinations, helping residents and tourists.
- **Brevard Road.** There are missing segments of sidewalk from I-240 to Haywood Road a redeveloping commercial area. This would serve several multi-unit developments and the adjacent single-family neighborhoods along the Brevard Road corridor.
- **North Louisiana Avenue.** Sidewalk along North Louisiana Avenue from Patton Avenue to Adams Hill Road. There is a shopping center, commercial area and several residential neighborhoods in this location. Emma Elementary and the Emma Family Resource Center are just outside the City limits but generate significant pedestrian traffic along this corridor.
- **New Leicester Highway.** Sidewalks are needed from Patton Avenue to Oak Hill Drive.

PNL (Unfunded) Greenway/Multi-Use Path Projects:

- **Swannanoa River Road, NC 81** Greenway from US25 to the Nature Center. This project is a component of a larger plan to develop the 14-mile Wilma Dykeman Riverway (2003 Study) along the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers in Asheville.
- **Reed Creek Greenway** runs along Reed Creek, adjacent to Broadway and connects the Glenn Creek Greenway from W.T. Weaver Boulevard to downtown Asheville. Master Plan completed in 2002.
- **Azalea Park Greenway** connects the Swannanoa River Greenway/Riverway to Azalea Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway and Mountains-to-Sea Trail.
- **French Broad River to Rhododendron Creek** Greenway section will connect the French Broad River Greenway to West Asheville and the West Asheville Park at the end of Vermont Avenue.
- **Reed Creek Greenway extension north to the French Broad River.** Connects Reed Creek Greenway and Glenn's Creek Greenway from the vicinity of W.T. weaver Boulevard to Riverside Drive – eventually connecting to the Riverway, the Woodfin Rail-trail corridor, and the area of the new I-26 bridge across the French Broad River.
- **Swannanoa River Greenway** along Swannanoa River Road (NC 81) from Azalea Park to the Riverbend Marketplace/South Tunnel Road.

B. Additions/Changes For 2006-2013 Horizon for the TIP:

- **E-4406 Swannanoa River Greenway** - This project will be renamed as the "Wilma Dykman Riverway: Greenway Section from US25 to Azalea Road" and is approximately 3.8 miles in length. A Feasibility Study will be scheduled for FFY '06 to look at integrating this multi-use trail with the Riverway and evaluating alignment options along the corridor (looking at both sides of the river for possible alignment phases).
- **E-4407 Amboy Road Extension** from NC 191 to French Broad River Park Feasibility Study - This project will be dropped from the TIP as it has already been incorporated into subsequent phases of the French Broad River Park system and E-4585, and is included in the Amboy Road to Hominy Creek Connector (E-3608) design.
- **E-4724 Azalea Park Connector** - The City has not executed a Municipal Agreement yet, but is finalizing schematics and working on r-o-w. this project is approximately 1 mile in length and will connect the new Azalea Park to 81 (Swannanoa River Road), tying into the Wilma Dykeman Riverway and E-4406, and continuing northeast along 81 to East Hawthorne Street connecting to the Beverly Hills Neighborhood. This Project will be scheduled for FFY '05 (\$400,000).
- **E-4723 Woodfin Rail-Trail/Greenway** - This Feasibility Study will be scheduled for FFY '06 (or earlier if possible). This rail corridor begins in the vicinity of the entrance to the Wilma Dykeman Riverway at Broadway, continues north to the Woodfin Riverpark, and north to 251 (an NC Moving Ahead Project). Exact beginning and end of trail to be determined by the feasibility study and the available rail-trail options. (Note this corridor could be impacted by the new I-26 (A-10) project).
- **Reed Creek Greenway** - This multi-use trail will connect the WT Weaver Blvd Greenway to Chestnut Street, creating linkages to an historic neighborhood and a new children's museum. This trail will be approximately 3/4 of a mile in length and the City has control of all the needed right-of-way for the project. You will need estimated mileage based on design and an estimated cost from us as soon as possible in order to program this into the TIP.

C. Opportunities for “Incidental” pedestrian improvements as part of TIP Roadway Projects:

- U-2801 US25A, Sweeten Creek Road, from Hendersonville Road to Roberts Road is scheduled “post years” and will widen Sweeten Creek Road to a multi-lane facility. This important urban corridor connects multiple neighborhoods in a high growth area and should include sidewalks in the design.
- U-4013, US25, Merrimon Avenue, “operational improvements,” that are “under study by Division”. A Feasibility Study was conducted that examined 3 options for roadway improvements (no-build, 5 lane, and 3 lane with access management and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities). Because of the traffic counts, established businesses, and right-of-way issues on Merrimon, both the 3 and 5 lane options were deemed infeasible, and there has been little movement on this project. However, there is continued interest on the part of the City, the MPO, and the Division 13 Office to seek out opportunities to improve this corridor for the safety and mobility of both pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.
- U-3302, revisions to the I-240, US25 (Merrimon), and SR1781 (Broadway) Interchange should take into consideration this area’s pedestrian network and particularly the Reed Creek Greenway.
- U-4715 The Asheville Signal System upgrade. Pedestrian signalization and signal phasing that accommodates pedestrians should be included at strategic intersections as part of this project to update the entire signal network.
- R-2813 NC 146 (Long Shoals Road) from US25 to I-26. This is categorized as a “rural project” because at the time it was placed in the TIP, this area was in fact fairly rural. In the past 10 years however, Long Shoals Road has become a major urban artery that serves multiple new business and Biltmore Park, a mixed-use, traditional neighborhood design development that is still growing. It also serves the Roberson Districts high, middle, and elementary schools. This area is under consideration for annexation into the city of Asheville and should include sidewalks on at least the northern side of the corridor, if not both sides.
- There are several Municipal Bridge projects to replace aging structures. Bridge structures in the Asheville City limits that are part of roadways that have sidewalks or are on the “Needed Linkages” list should conform to the NCDOT designs for bridges that accommodate pedestrians.

D. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Fiscal Constraints

The Long Range Transportation Plan is a federal requirement and must be revised every 5 years with public involvement by the MPO. It should lay out a vision, objectives, and priorities for the future with a 25 year “planning horizon.” The MPO is currently undergoing its revision of the 2005 to 2030 with the guidance of a local “LRTP Steering Committee,” and must complete and submit the Plan to NCDOT and FHWA by October 1, 2005.

In support of this process, FBRMPO and NCDOT are working to complete traffic modeling for Buncombe and Henderson counties and to “merge” the two models so that they can work together in the Plan. NCDOT is also initiating a model for Haywood County that will work in concert with the other models. These will provide a “snapshot” of traffic patterns and make provide decision-makers with traffic projection information. Community needs and the TIP and Priority Needs List will be re-assessed along with congestion traffic analysis and “hot spot” (highly congested areas) monitoring as part of a “deficiency analysis” of the models.

Additionally, the Long Range Transportation Plan must be “fiscally constrained,” identifying what projects can be funded from what sources over the next 25 years. This will require the MPO to look strategically at current TIP and PNL projects to

determine which are the most important and feasible projects to implement within the projected fund available.

The recently published executive summary of the draft of the 2004 Statewide Comprehensive Plan indicates that this may require some tough decision making on the part of the regional MPOs. There are currently over \$84 Billion dollars in “anticipated” transportation needs, but only about 55 Billion in anticipated revenues, almost a \$30 Billion dollar gap. Indications are that Enhancement and small urban funding will remain at similar levels, highway and roadway maintenance and rail will see a slight increase, but that new highway construction and “urban loop” projects will decrease.

The MPO should insure that pedestrian issues are represented in the LRTP planning process along with all other modes of transportation and mobility needs as it moves forward. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) purposefully appointed several planners and representatives who are familiar with pedestrian and other non-motorized forms of travel on the LRTP Steering Committee, including Tom Redinger, former member of the state Bicycle committee, local TCC and long-time member of the Asheville Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force.

E. Pedestrian Connectivity and the I-26 Corridor

The I-26 Corridor will be developed by NCDOT over the current alignments of 19/23 and 240 as two TIP projects: A-10 from the Buncombe County line to just north of Broadway, and I-2513 through Asheville and including the I-26/240/I-40 interchange, known as the “I-26 Connector” Project. The community has worked extensively with NCDOT on issues surrounding this project through the Community Coordinating Committee (“CCC”), including a series of public forums and workshops dedicated to the project. The MPO’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force developed a list of concerns for pedestrians relating to the project.

Currently, the City is staffing an NCDOT sanctioned and City Council appointed “Aesthetics Committee” to identify and develop opportunities to improve the aesthetics of the proposed highway. Within all three processes, citizens have demonstrated a clear concern for and dedication to improving pedestrian and bicycle connections and facilities in relationship to the corridor. While actual alignment and final design have not been determined by NCDOT, several general areas of concern and/or potential opportunity are evident and listed below from north to south along the corridor.

- **Vicinity of Broadway, Riverside Drive and 19/23, near UNCA campus.** The City is moving forward with plans for the Reed Creek Greenway which will connect UNCA and the Botanical Gardens at WT Weaver, continue to parallel Broadway and tie-in to a new children’s museum (The Health Adventure), the Historic Montford neighborhood and downtown. The Reed Creek Greenway extension is currently being studied and will connect this area to Riverside Drive. At Riverside Drive and Broadway, the **Wilma Dykeman Riverway** would have its northern terminus, providing a gateway to the Riverway and it’s greenway system. North of that, Riverside Drive continues to Woodfin, following a potential rail-trail corridor that is currently on the TIP for a NCDOT Feasibility Study. A-10 and I-2513 designs should consider planned and existing greenways as they may be impacted by the highway, maintaining or improving underpasses that accommodate sections of the Reed Creek Greenway extension and the Wilma Dykeman Riverway.
- **Bridge over the French Broad River.** Near the intersection of Broadway and Riverside Drive, I-2513 will include an interstate standard bridge that will leave from the eastern side of the French Broad River and continue across the river at a southwesterly tangent, coming down in the vicinity of the Westgate Shopping Center or Sunspree Resort (actual alignment is still to be determined). A separated pedestrian and bicycle facility should be included in the bridge design to connect greenway facilities, the UNCA campus, and other generators on the east side of the river to Patton Avenue and its commercial areas. RiverLink and the Aesthetics Committee encourage NCDOT to look at creative designs so that the bridge can achieve multiple functions as well as be a beautiful structure that contributes to the multi-modal and scenic character that is Asheville. The addition of a separated bicycle and pedestrian facility would require additional bridge surface that could fit between, alongside of, or above or below the roadway surface – much like the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, the Cooper River Bridge in Charleston, or the Bay Bridge in San Francisco. RiverLink and City staff have collected many examples of bridges in the US, Europe, and Asia that share bridge structure between the roadway and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

- Another opportunity to provide a **connection across the river for Bicycles and Pedestrians as part of “Alternate 5”** – one of the potential alignments for I-2513 that was developed in conjunction with community input from the CCC and in the community forums. It offers a new bridge to serve local traffic that is just south of the existing Smoky Park Bridge and may provide an opportunity to designate/develop a bicycle and pedestrian facility across the French Broad as part of the new bridge or as part of Smoky Park Bridge. Such a facility again would need to be connected to the Riverway corridor, the WECAN neighborhood on the east bank of the river and to local streets (Hazel Mill, Patton, the drive into WestGate) on the west bank.
- **19/23 from the new I-26 bridge to 240.** Once the new interstate bridge leaves the east bank of the river, the remaining section of what is now 19/23 to Patton Avenue and 240 will no longer be used the way it is now. NCDOT and the City should study this road segment to determine its future and best re-use applications. This section of road may present opportunities for connections to the Wilma Dykeman Riverway and other connections to the City’s greenway and bicycle and pedestrian transportation system.
- **Connections to Patton Avenue and the West Gate Shopping Area.** Depending on the final alternative chosen by NCDOT engineers for the 240/I-26 alignment and design, opportunities to connect pedestrians to Patton Avenue and the new sidewalk planned for construction should be developed.
- **Haywood Road Bridge and interchange.** This is a critical corridor to the community and economy of West Asheville. Bridge and interchange designs should accommodate and improve pedestrian and bicycle use along Haywood Road. Aesthetics Committee members have expressed interest in continuing streetscape elements across the bridge as much as possible, perhaps widening the bridge (and thereby tunneling I-26/240 to an extent) in order to accommodate additional commercial or park space above the interstate.
- **State Street underpass.** State Street is an important pedestrian and bicycle link from West Asheville to Amboy Road and the Asheville Park and Greenway system along the French Broad River. When I-2513 is built to widen 240, lighting and upgrading of sidewalk along State Street will improve the safety, look, and connectivity of this pedestrian thoroughfare.
- **Amboy Road/191 and Hominy Creek Road greenway and neighborhood connections.** This section of the project must be reviewed for its impact on the French Broad River Park and Greenway system and the Hominy Creek to Amboy Road Greenway Connector (E-3608). Additionally a proposed access road from Amboy to 191 should be evaluated for its connectivity to local streets and what that would mean for traffic and pedestrian safety.